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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDMA #0433 1291501
ZNR UUUUU ZZH ZUI RUEWMCE5951 1291519
P 091501Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC0000
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
ZEN/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000433

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

PARIS FOR WALLER; LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL SY
SUBJECT: CANADA STATEMENT ON SYRIA'S RECORD ON HUMAN
RIGHTS/ELECTIONS

¶1. (SBU) THE CANADIAN EMBASSY ALERTED US THAT THE CANADIANS HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT ON APRIL 26 TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT THE SENTENCING TWO DAYS EARLIER OF SYRIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER ANWAR AL-BUNNI, THE TRIALS OF OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND THE PROCESS SURROUNDING THE APRIL 22-23 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS HERE. POST REGULARLY MEETS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM LIKE-MINDED EMBASSIES, INCLUDING THE CANADIAN AND EUROPEAN MISSIONS, TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND ADVOCATE FOR USG POSITIONS IN THE AREAS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY. WE ARE PLANNING TO HOST A LIKE-MINDED MEETING LATER THIS MONTH IN THE RUN-UP TO THE SYRIAN PRESIDENTIAL PLEBISCITE EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE AT THE END OF MAY.

¶2. (SBU) THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE CANADIAN STATEMENT:

THE HONORABLE PETER MACKAY, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF THE ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY, TODAY MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON THE APRIL 24 TRIAL AND SENTENCING OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER ANWAR AL-BUNNI TO FIVE YEARS' DETENTION, AS WELL AS THE CONDUCT OF THE APRIL 22 AND 23 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS:

"THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE TRIAL OF ANWAR AL-BUNNI ON CHARGES RELATED TO HIS EFFORTS TO BUILD A CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SYRIA AND DENOUNCE TORTURE IN SYRIAN PRISONS. WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE ONGOING TRIALS OF OPPOSITION FIGURE KAMAL LABWANI AND INTELLECTUALS MICHEL KILO, MAHMOUD 'ISSA, KHALIL HUSSEIN AND SULEIMAN AL-SHUMMAR.

"SYRIA MUST ENSURE THAT ITS DOMESTIC LAWS AND PRACTICES ARE IN KEEPING WITH ITS INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS. CANADA URGES SYRIA TO RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND TAKE CONCRETE STEPS TOWARD RESPECTING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GUARANTEEING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION, STARTING WITH THE RECALL OF ITS 44-YEAR-OLD EMERGENCY LAW. SYRIA MUST ALSO TAKE FIRM MEASURES TO STOP ARBITRARY ARREST, INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION, TORTURE AND CRUEL, INHUMAN AND DEGRADING TREATMENT, AS WELL AS TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF THESE PRACTICES, PROSECUTE PERPETRATORS AND PROVIDE REMEDIES FOR THE VICTIMS.

"THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IS FURTHERMORE CONCERNED WITH THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE SYRIAN ELECTION LAW, SYSTEM AND PROCESS. SYRIA SHOULD GUARANTEE ITS CITIZENS THE RIGHT TO GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AS PART OF A FULLY FAIR AND PARTICIPATORY POLITICAL PROCESS, AS PART OF A MOVE TOWARD PROVIDING ITS CITIZENS FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY,

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW."
CORBIN